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ABSTRACT

A study used two different rankings (a national study of occupational prestige and a study by the Arizona Department of Education [ADE]) of occupations to identify the extent that occupational prejudice affects the opinions that individuals have about job opportunity. Two lists of 20 occupations were prepared and given to 54 persons, 22 of them teachers, who were enrolled in a Master of Arts in Education Counseling (MA) program in Arizona. The participants were asked to rank order the occupations based on their perception of the best chance for employment in Arizona and on their perception of the occupations' prestige in Arizona. The results showed a surprising agreement between the rankings of the MA students, particularly those of the teachers, and the ADE and prestige study rankings. The teachers also seemed to feel that the chances for employment in higher prestige occupations are less than those in lower prestige occupations. The study concluded that the teachers' opinions may be based on misleading media and government reports that show low-wage jobs in the majority of jobs created; they also may not be aware that many skilled crafts jobs are not being filled. Therefore, teachers may be steering students into white-collar or low-wage jobs instead of into satisfying skilled crafts jobs, based on beliefs rather than the realities of the job market. (KC)

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jobs for the nineties

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REALITY OR POLITICS

by

Jettie M. McWilliams and Robert Miller

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

We began the trip into the embattled zone of reality-politics-jobs innocently enough. A question was generated by a publication by the Arizona State Department of Education(ADE) entitled "Vocational Education Funding Priority List" in which a ranking of job training priorities was established based upon "Job Demand" combined with "Supply/Demand" and program "Placement". The question had two parts; would people rank employment opportunity according to their perception of the prestige of occupations, or in the order of their actual chance for job placement? The question was based on our experience with at least four studies concerning occupational prestige, i.e.,

Hodge, Robert W. and Paul M. Siegel, Occupational Prestige in the United States, 1925-1963, American Journal of Sociology, 1966, 72, 286-295.

Kanzaki, George A., Fifty Years (1925-1975) of Stability in the Social Status of Occupations, The Vocational Guidance Quarterly, December 1976, pp. 101-105.

Clark, Arthur John, and James M. Seals, Student Perceptions of the Social Status of Careers for College Graduates, Journal of College Student Personnel, July 1975, pp. 293-297.

Fossum, John A. and Michael L. Moore, The Stability of Longitudinal and Cross-Sectional Occupational Prestige Rankings, Journal of Vocational Behavior 7, (1975) pp. 305-311.

We used two different rankings (ADE and Prestige) of occupations to study the extent that "occupational prejudice" affects the opinions individuals have on their attitudes about job opportunity.

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A ready source of individuals was found in a very successful M.A. in Education in Counseling Program (Human Relations Emphasis) administered by Northern Arizona University at Luke Air Force Base just west of metropolitan Phoenix. Twenty occupations were selected from a comparison of the ADE and Prestige listings.

(Overhead #1)

These occupations were randomized and placed on two lists. One asked to "rank order the following occupations based upon your perception of the best chance for employment in Arizona"; the other asked to "rank order the following occupations based upon your perception of their prestige in Arizona". These lists were given to 54 individuals, all of whom were studying in the Luke Program on weekends and evenings and were employed full time during the day in the following occupations; 22 teachers, 10 nurses, 7 counselors, 4 in the USAF, 3 administrators and 8 in various other occupations.

The mean and standard deviation of each ranked category was calculated for six combinations. For the occupational and prestige surveys three groupings were made; the group as a whole (54), the teachers (22), and other (32). The rankings by each respondent were used to re-rank those categories. The occupational and prestige rankings from the survey were compared to the ADE and prestige rankings using the Spearman Rank Order Coefficient of Correlation

$$r_s = 1 - \frac{6 \sum D^2}{N(N^2 - 1)}$$

The results are shown in Table 1. **(overhead #2)**

At first blush, and we wish to stress that our results need further investigation, we found a surprising agreement between the rankings of the MA students, particularly those of the teachers, and the ADE ranking, indicating to us a timely awareness of job opportunity. The group also seemed to share our common feeling about occupational prestige.

While we feel that these findings in themselves have rather interesting implications for the public schools and vocational education, the finding that gave us pause is shaded black in the Table. *Note that although the*

PRESTIGE

National Studies

1. Computer Technician
2. Practical Nurse
3. Personnel Assistant
4. Policeman
5. Accountant
6. Small Business Manager
7. Nursing Assistant
8. Carpenter
9. General Office Clerk
10. Nursery Operator
11. Auto Mechanic
12. Trained Machinist
13. Draftsman
14. Cosmetologist
15. Truck Driver
16. Secretary
17. Retail Store Clerk
18. Restaurant Cook
19. Maintenance Man
20. Farm Worker

CHANCES FOR EMPLOYMENT

Arizona Department of Education

1986

1. Maintenance Man
2. Retail Store Clerk
3. Farm Worker
4. Restaurant Cook
5. Computer Technician
6. Secretary
7. General Office Clerk
8. Nursing Assistant
9. Nursery Operator
10. Personnel Assistant
11. Small Business Manager
12. Accountant
13. Policeman
14. Practical Nurse
15. Auto Mechanic
16. Carpenter
17. Cosmetologist
18. Trained Machinist
19. Truck Driver
20. Draftsman

				BEST CHANCE FOR EMPLOYMENT			
				TOTAL	TEACH	OTHERS	
				ARIZONA DEP. OF ED. RANKING	+.63	+.70	+.50
				NATIONAL PRESTIGE RANKING	- .27		
PRESTIGE RANKING	TOTAL 54	+.79		- .48			
	TEACH 22	+.75			- .5		
	OTHER 32	+.77				- .14	

This matrix was created from data developed from a comparison of Spearman Rank Order Correlations of the rankings of 54 individuals (22 teachers and 32 others). The individuals ranked 20 occupations as to their prestige and then those rankings were compared to several national rankings. The individuals also ranked those same occupations as to their best chance for employment and their rankings were compared to rankings created by the Arizona Center for Research in Vocational Education for the Arizona Department of Education

teachers are primarily in agreement with both the ADE employment ranking and the national prestige ranking, there is no significant correlation between the ADE employment ranking and the national prestige ranking and yet there is a significant negative correlation between the teachers' perception of the employment ranking and their perception of the prestige ranking.

This seems to indicate to us that the teachers tend to feel 1) the chances for employment in higher prestige occupations are less than the ADE study showed, and 2) the chances for employment in the lower prestige occupations are greater than indicated by the ADE study. These findings pulled us from Reality into Politics. If they truly reflect the opinions of our Arizona teachers one must wonder why they have been misled. A headline in the December 10, 1986 issue of "The Arizona Republic" seemed to point in that direction.

(overhead #3)

Perhaps, we thought, the teachers are connecting high opportunity with low wages, low prestige and gaining the opinion that if you were looking for employment you could always find a job in a low paying low prestige occupation--"everyone knows that we are moving into a service economy where low paying jobs will be the rule".

Then Robert J. Samuelson reacted to the "Bluestone" study in the February 23, 1987 issue of Newsweek.

(overhead #4)

This was followed in the March/April 1987 edition of "First Monday", a Republican publication as follows:

(overhead #5)

(overhead #6)

What then can we expect for the 1990 s?

WE KNOW

Wednesday, December 10, 1986 The Arizona Republic

50% of new jobs pay under \$7,000, research reveals

**Fewer posts pay
\$28,000 or more**

Associated Press

WASHINGTON --- More than half of the 8 million jobs created between 1979 and 1984 in the United States paid less than \$7,000 a year, while the number of jobs paying \$28,000 or more fell, according to a new study. The report, released Tuesday by the current and incoming Democratic chairmen of the Joint Economic Committee of Congress,...

The authors of the study--Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, political-economy professors at the University of Massachusetts-Boston and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, respectively--said the proliferation of low-wage jobs points to growing income inequality in the United States.

The American Job Machine

Contrary to what
you may hear, it
isn't producing
only low-skilled
and low-paying
employment

One great strength of the U.S. economy--or so it has seemed--has been its ability to generate new jobs: about 12 million since late 1982. Now we're told it ain't so. Introducing his new trade legislation, Senate Finance Committee chairman Lloyd Bentsen of Texas recently embraced the new revisionism. Sure there are more jobs, he says, but they're lousy jobs. Nearly 60 percent of the new jobs in the past six years are low-skilled jobs paying less than \$7,000 a year.

Welcome to Economics Propaganda 101. The notion that the U.S. economy is producing mostly low-paying, unskilled jobs is an economic fiction. Generally speaking, the mix between well-paid and poorly paid work is the same as in the 1970's. Creating the impression that it's otherwise is an exercise in mythmaking designed to advance (as in Bentsen's case) a political agenda purporting to protect high-paying jobs.

overhead #5
March/April First Monday

The Myth Of Low-Wage Jobs

The economy is in robust health, millions of new jobs are being created and inflation and interest rates remain at rock bottom levels...

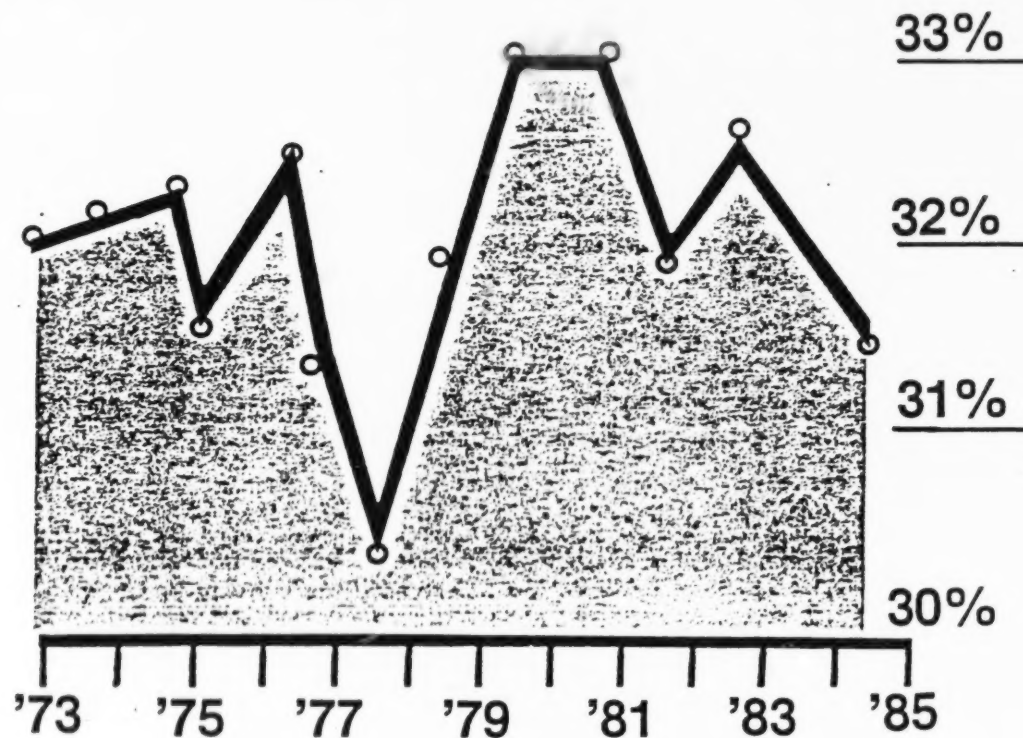
...The Democrats are doing their best to distort the good news about America's economic health...

Janet Norwood, commissioner of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, agreed that the impact of earlier recessions strongly influenced the outcome of the Bluestone study. The chart at right supports Norwood's contention that the proportion of workers earning low wages peaked in the recessions years of the 1975 and 1981-1982, but declined in subsequent recovery years...

"It's sad. The Democrats are so obviously grasping at straws as their only response to a voting public.

Low-Wage Workers

As a percentage of
total labor force



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

1. from this experience that news releases must be checked against more than one source.
2. that service sector employment will increase but the jobs within that sector will not necessarily be low prestige and low wage.
"The service sector employs many low-paid workers, but it also provides jobs for 85 percent of our professionals and nearly three-fourths of our managers, who tend to have relatively high earnings, whatever their industry." Janet Norwood.
3. from Harris polls (Inside America)(**overhead #7**) that
 professionals and skilled blue collar workers gain the greatest job satisfaction from their work

and from the same publication

that foreign nations are able to recruit dedicated workers who can be trained to do mass-production jobs reasonably well at only a fraction of the pay U.S. workers receive.

and that This means that manufacturing jobs will continue to be exported at an increasing rate.

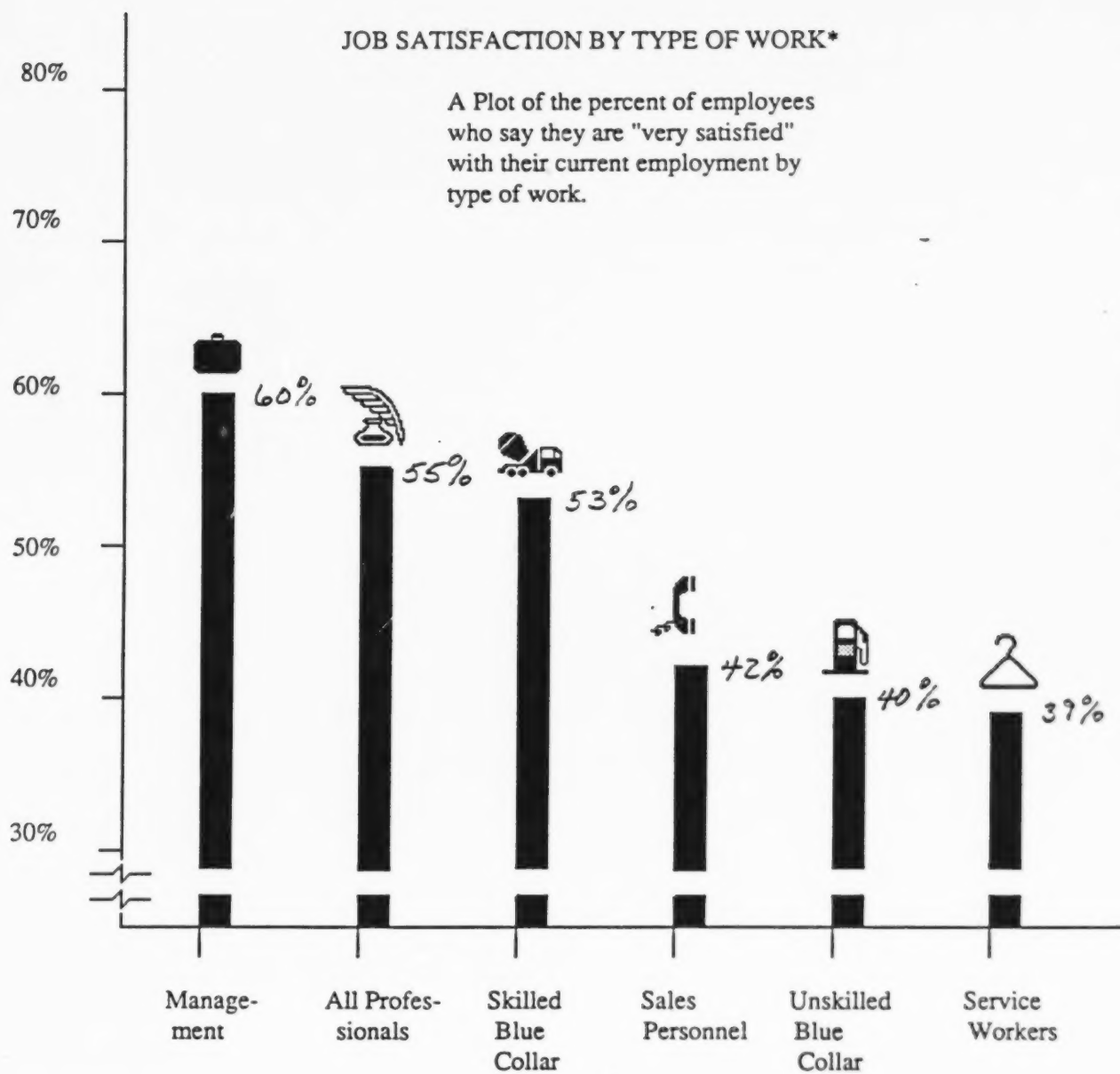
4. Also according to the September 14, 1987 Wall Street Journal there is **"A Growing Shortage Of Skilled Craftsmen"**
(overhead #8)

that this shortage could "encourage more manufacturers to move operations to foreign nations."

that "There's a feeling among younger workers that factory jobs are dirty and boring."

that "young people are shunning factory jobs even in traditionally blue-collar cities such as Pittsburgh, St. Louis Detroit."

that "manufacturing companies can no longer depend on older workers to train younger replacements, as they



*Harris, Louis, Inside America, New York: Vintage Book, 1987, p. 52

September 14, 1987 Wall Street Journal

Workers Wanted

A Growing Shortage
Of Skilled Craftsmen
Troubles Some Firms

Young People Shun Factories

"In the past year, much attention has been focused on the growing scarcity of service workers for restaurants, hotels, and stores. But a far more serious labor shortage is emerging for skilled blue-collar craftsmen ranging from machinists and electricians to shipbuilders and bricklayers. "

"...could encourage more manufacturers to move operations to foreign nations."

"...Electric Boat ... has more than 300 job openings for machinists, pipe fitters, welders and other skilled craftsmen..."

Electric Boat also says "high-school guidance counselors tend to steer graduates away from factory work in favor of college or white-collar jobs."

once did when craft jobs were passed down from father to son."

And that "We're facing a situation where, in 10 years, we won't have anyone who knows how to repair machinery, cut precision metal parts or build a airplane engine from scratch."

We reluctantly agree with the Wall Street Journal that quotes Electric Boat who also says "high school guidance counselors tend to steer graduates away from factory work in favor of college or white-collar jobs." but also wish to add that from our study teachers may also tend to steer them away from highly satisfying skilled craftsmen occupations into low prestige occupations based on beliefs acquired from information distributed to them for political reasons rather than the realities of the job market.

And finally

As you leave this afternoon we hope that you will remember Louis Harris's insight:

"Indeed, as reported elsewhere in this volume, it increases the urgent necessity for this country to radically revamp its education system to turn out more highly skilled workers who are able and committed to holding down much more sophisticated jobs producing the products and services that will once again make the U.S. unique and competitive."

THANK YOU

THE GREAT AMERICAN JOB MACHINE:

THE PROLIFERATION OF LOW WAGE
EMPLOYMENT IN THE U.S. ECONOMY

A STUDY PREPARED FOR
THE JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

BY
BARRY BLUESTONE and
BENNETT HARRISON
DECEMBER 1988

WAGES
(1984 \$)

* \$13K+

\$10.5K-
* \$13K

\$7K-
\$10.5K

\$7K OR LESS



* ESTIMATED WAGE
LEVEL BELOW WHICH
100% OF NET NEW
JOBS WERE CREATED

NET INCREASE IN NEW JOBS (1979-1984)
BY ANNUAL WAGE GROUPING
EACH FIGURE REPRESENTS 400,000 NEW JOBS